FAMILY HOMELESS SNAPSHOT
CHARLOTTE - MECKLENBURG 2014 - 2015

RELEASED MARCH 2017

TOOLKIT FOR ACTION

This toolkit is designed to help you take the data from the report **Charlotte-Mecklenburg Family Homelessness Snapshot** and translate that information into actionable steps.

The report describes the impact of family homelessness on families and children and what it looks like in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. It also outlines national best practice interventions and strategies to end and prevent family homelessness.

UNC Charlotte's Urban Institute prepared the report as part of the Housing Instability and Homelessness Report Series funded by Mecklenburg County Community Support Services.

Photo Source: Comrade King, July 2012

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

A family is defined as a household with at least one adult over the age of 18 and one child under the age of 18. Family homelessness is defined as literally homeless (staying in shelters, transitional housing or on the streets) and living in unstable housing. Locally, we measure family homelessness using three data sources presented below: Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, Point-in-Time Count (PIT) data, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) data.

DURING THE YEAR

- **2,405** persons were in sheltered families experiencing homelessness at some point during the year between October 1, 2014 and September 30, 2015 (HMIS Data).

ON ONE NIGHT

- **758** persons were in sheltered and unsheltered families experiencing homelessness on January 29, 2015 (PIT Count Data).

IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

- **4,388** students were identified as experiencing homeless or facing housing instability at some point during the 2014 to 2015 school year in CMS (CMS Data).
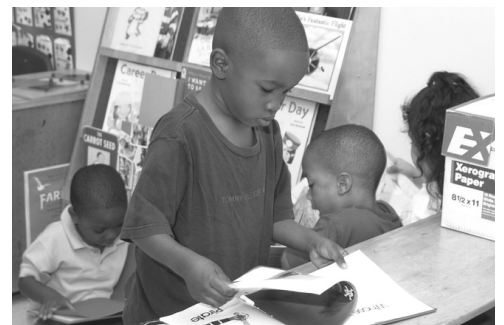
Photo Source: US Department of Education, August 2013

Photo Source: KOMUnews, February 2014

WHY IT MATTERS

THE IMPACT

Family homelessness has significant negative impacts on families and children including **family separation, poor physical and mental health outcomes** and **lower social-emotional and academic well-being**. Children experiencing homelessness are more likely to miss school, score lower in math and reading tests, and are at a greater risk of dropping out of high school.

THE CONSEQUENCES

REACH FAR BEYOND

WHEN KIDS EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS

2014 - 2015

NOT CONNECTED TO SERVICES

38% of CMS students in emergency shelter or transitional housing were **not** connected to McKinney-Vento Services even though they were eligible. These services include access to transportation and other educational supports for students experiencing homelessness.

CHRONICALLY ABSENT

29% of CMS students in emergency shelter or transitional housing were chronically absent, missing more than 18 days of school. Chronically absent students in CMS that experience sheltered homelessness were 21% less likely to be proficient in reading.

BEHIND IN READING PROFICIENCY

28% of CMS students experiencing sheltered homelessness were proficient in reading compared to 58% of all CMS students. Grade level proficiency in reading is a significant predictor for high school graduation and other life course outcomes.

WHAT IT TAKES

Photo Source:Josh Lee, December 2011

Photo Source: Edinburgh University Student's Association, July 2016

THE SOLUTION

Ending and preventing family homelessness requires a comprehensive, strategic community approach. The needs of families experiencing homelessness are complex and varied. Most families experiencing homelessness do so for a short period of time, lasting 3 to 6 months. About 25% of families experience one episode of homelessness that lasts one year or longer. Less than 10% of families experience 3 or more episodes of homelessness and require more intensive services. Family homelessness results from a lack of affordable housing, poverty, domestic violence and trauma, the intergenerational transfer of homelessness, and evictions and foreclosures.

There are multiple tools and strategies available to address family homelessness and its causes, but they must be tailored to meet the unique needs of families and children in order to be effective. A coordinated system that brings together public and private partners and resources to provide families with affordable permanent housing and adequate supports and services is required.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE WORK

BECOME INFORMED

Learn about resources available to families.

IMPROVE OUTCOMES

Close the educational service gap and strengthen coordination.

INCREASE HOUSING

Fund permanent housing and strategies that work.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

BECOME INFORMED

It is important to learn about the resources that are available to families and children experiencing homelessness. The educational and homeless services systems have complementary statutory requirements which can serve as a foundation to work together. For example, the Continuum of Care is required to collaborate with CMS to identify and inform homeless families of their eligibility for McKinney-Vento Services and to consider the educational needs of children when placing families in shelter. In addition, CMS must ensure that homeless students can enroll in school even when paperwork is not in place and that local McKinney-Vento liaisons coordinate with homeless service providers to ensure proper connection to services.

ACTION: Visit the National Center for Homeless Education for more information. https://nche.ed.gov

IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

In order to strengthen coordination across service sectors the following steps should be considered:

- Increase the number of Social Workers in CMS schools.
- Provide training to front-line education and homeless services staff on resources available.
- Consider data-sharing policies that promote coordination and access to services.
- Invite McKinney-Vento liaisons to Continuum of Care meetings and institute a recurring agenda item focused on education.
- Integrate the school system into the community's Coordinated Assessment process.
- Post information about the educational rights of homeless children and youth in shelters.
- Establish an MOU between the Continuum of Care and CMS to establish a protocol for student identification, service referrals and information sharing.

ACTION: Advocate for recommended steps using contact information below.

INCREASE HOUSING OPTIONS

It is not possible to end family homelessness without increasing permanent housing options. This includes affordable housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, rapid re-housing and leveraging other public and private resources to subsidize housing for families. It is also vital that funding be targeted to programs that use strategies that work: a two-generational approach, supportive services, and a Housing First approach. Transitional Housing is best matched with families that have the highest needs and barriers to housing.

ACTION: Target funding for permanent housing for families.